



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development**

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE  
ENGAGEMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED SERVICE INDUSTRY**

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(Human Resource Development)**

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Final Year Project Report

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND  
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED  
SERVICE INDUSTRY**

NORSAFIKAH BINTI IDRIS

This project is submitted  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a  
Bachelor of Science with Honours  
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Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

(2020)

The project entitled 'The relationship between social support and employee engagement among employees in selected service industry' was prepared by Norsafikah Binti Idris and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development)

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## **ABSTRACT**

Achieving employee engagement among the employees is the major concern for the organization. In order to promote employee engagement, social support has become an increasingly important consideration for the employees and organization. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social support and employee engagement among employees. Questionnaires were administered to 98 employees in selected service industry at Sibu, Sarawak. Pearson Correlation was used to test the hypotheses of the study. The result of the study found that supervisor support has significant relationship with employee engagement. However, co-worker support has no significant relationship with employee engagement. These result will become precise attention to the management of service industry and practioners who are interested in enhancing employee engagement of the employees. The findings of this study may provide useful information and body of knowledge for both practitioners and future researchers for the purpose of improving the practice of social support.

*Keywords:* Social support, supervisor support, co-worker support, employee engagement

## **ABSTRAK**

Mencapai penglibatan pekerja di kalangan pekerja adalah perhatian utama organisasi. Untuk meningkatkan penglibatan pekerja, sokongan sosial menjadi pertimbangan yang semakin penting bagi pekerja dan organisasi. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara sokongan sosial dan penglibatan pekerja di antara pekerja. Soal selidik diberikan kepada 98 pekerja dalam industri perkhidmatan terpilih di Sibu, Sarawak. Ujian Kolerasi (Pearson) digunakan untuk mengkaji hipotesis kajian. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa sokongan penyelia mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan penglibatan pekerja. Walau bagaimanapun, sokongan rakan sekerja tidak mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan penglibatan pekerja. Hasil ini akan menjadi perhatian yang tepat kepada pengurusan industri perkhidmatan dan pengamal yang berminat untuk meningkatkan penglibatan pekerja. Penemuan kajian ini dapat memberikan maklumat dan pengetahuan yang berguna untuk kedua-dua pengamal dan penyelidik masa depan untuk tujuan meningkatkan amalan sokongan sosial.

*Kata Kunci:* Sokongan sosial, sokongan penyelia, sokongan rakan sekerja, penglibatan pekerja

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of Study**

Service industry is one of the industries that do work for the client and arrange for things but nothing to do with manufacturing. Each economy comprises of three industries. The primary industry consists of mining and agriculture while the secondary industry such as manufacturing and for the tertiary industry such as service industry. Other than that, a service industry is also defined as an economic section that gives certain intangible action that fulfils a specific require. Companies inside this industry perform tasks that are valuable to their customers. The service industry subsists of the soft divisions of the economy such as insurance, government, education, and social services. The services could include transport, dissemination and deal of products from maker to a customer as may happen in wholesaling and retailing, or could include the arrangement of a service, such as in bug control or entertainment. Products could be changed within the preparation of giving a service, as occurs within the eatery industry or in hardware repair. On the other hand, the attention is on people work together with individuals and serving the client instead of changing physical products. The service industry, whether it is transportation, recreation, entertainment or finance, has engaged in specialized practices involving interaction and interference between humans and machines. In modern language, service is a function done directly or indirectly to meet the needs of customers. Service employees also rely on services such as telephones, messaging apps, and so on to help facilitate their contact with customers.

Social support is a highly communicative interaction between individuals who wish to obtain help and those who provide help. Besides, social support alludes to

the sort of help that people get or in other word anticipate to obtain from people who come into contact with them in any other idea (Papakonstantinou & Papadopoulos, 2009). Within the work environment, support might be determined from a few sources, prominently the organization, supervisors, co-workers, and vital players' exterior the work environment, such as friends and family (Lysaght & Larmout-Trode, 2008). Social support is important because people with greater support tend to actively engage in their occupation. According to the conceptualization of work that assets by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), the support from social is a form of job resources. Supervisor and associates are the other entities that can contribute to social support (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988; Simosi, 2012).

When individuals interact with the intention of helping each other, they are considered involved in socially positive transactions and there is employee engagement in those interactions. It has been confirmed by the researcher that engagement can manages to greater performance of financial and greater job performance of employee (Ali, 2016). Engagement has progressively been perceived as one of the ways of checking the commitment of the employees to the organizations, works and as one of the methods of generating more extremely effective work environment. As mentioned by Saks (2006), engagement is additional than just a state of mind; it is the level to which a person is mindful and absorbed within the performance of his or her parts. Employee engagement has been described as “an employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state of an individual which directed toward preferred organizational results” (Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Employee engagement could play a vital role in addressing this issue, but promoting engagement during a turbulent time is easier said than done. With the full force of disruption, service sector employers need to boost the engagement of the workers in order to maximize their operations (Ostrega, 2016).

One of the most important criteria that perceived as a very important element to enlighten employee engagement is the support from the supervisor (McDonald, 2016). An

effective supervisor support is a higher-order, relational transparency and balanced processing of information. It has been confirmed by researcher that engagement can occurs surprisingly when the supervisors are inspiring (McDonald, 2016). This is because, supervisors are responsible to communicate with employee and when the employee sense that the work that has been done is meaningful, it can lead to the engagement. Undeniable that supportive environment is needed so that employees feel safe and can experiment or try new things without worry of the consequences. Relationship at the organization had an important effect and considered as one of the employees' engagements mechanisms (May et al., 2004; McDonald, 2016). Based on the previous finding, the material and sentimental support from the supervisors in the organization has an important effect on employees' engagement (Ali, 2016).

Future research highly suggested that another factors in increasing the employee engagement (Hasanati, 2018). There is a must to have a knowledge on the significance of social support in increasing the employee engagement. Hence, this study will examine the relationship between the support social and employee engagement among the employees in selected service industry.

### **Statement of Problem**

This study is to examine the relationship between social support and employee engagement. There are so many studies that related to this topic in previous studies but then, most of the studies were conducted away from Malaysia such as United States and Canada. Even if the study was conducted in Malaysia, the study only focus on certain things like work-life balance, motivation and most of the research in Malaysia was conducted in Peninsular Malaysia. Besides, it is hard to find the studies that related to this topic in service industry.

Social support is one of the main factors that can influence employee engagement. The issue of this employee engagement is crucial as it can affect performance of the organization. Prior studies have investigate in case the social support which are supervisor and co-worker support capable in contributing to the variance in engagement of work among the nurses in Malaysia and the result is the support from supervisor was positively interrelated to work engagement while the support from co-worker was found not influence work engagement (Othman & Nasurdin, 2012). Social exchange theory speculates if the employees notice the supervisor are supportive and taking care of their welfare, the employees will feel committed to the organization and feel appreciative to ‘give as good as one gets’ to the supervisor by stick to the organization (Othman & Nasurdin, 2012). As stated by Blancero et al., (1996); Othman & Nasurdin, (2012), a great supervisory reaction and positive interaction between the subordinates and supervisors may increment the competencies of the employees. Other than that, social support moreover plays as an obvious motivational part as an inventive workplace that will build a person’s readiness to commit one’s endeavors and capabilities to the errand of the work. Consequently, employee will be able to complete the task successfully and the objective of the work will accomplished. For instance, the support from co-worker and the input of the execution will boost the possibility of being effective in accomplishing goals of work (Othman & Nasurdin, 2012).

As stated by Ali (2016), supervisor support has been described as an employees’ opinions regarding the level of their involvements were appreciated and their well-being be concerned by the supervisors. Besides, supervisors are important because they are responsible to give direction and evaluates the other employees’ performance. Other than that, an open and encouraging environment can make the employees feel harmless in the organization and engage perfectly with their responsibility. According to Kahn (1990); Ali (2016), with

supportive environments, the individuals are permitted to experiment and try out unused things without fear of the upcoming impacts or consequences.

In this study, the researcher aimed to fill the gap that has been mentioned by previous study. There is another factors in increasing the employee engagement has been suggested by the future researcher (Hasanati, 2018). Hence, this study will examine the relationship between social support and employee engagement among the employees in selected service industry.

Ha1: There is a significance relationship between supervisor support and employee engagement.

Ha2: There is significance relationship between co-worker support and employee engagement.

## **Research Objectives**

### **General Objective:**

1. To examine the relationship between social support and employee engagement.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To examine the relationship between supervisor support and employee engagement
2. To examine the relationship between co-worker support and employee engagement

## **Research Hypotheses**

Ha1: There is a significance relationship between supervisor support and employee engagement.

Ha2: There is significance relationship between co-worker support and employee engagement.



## Conceptual Framework

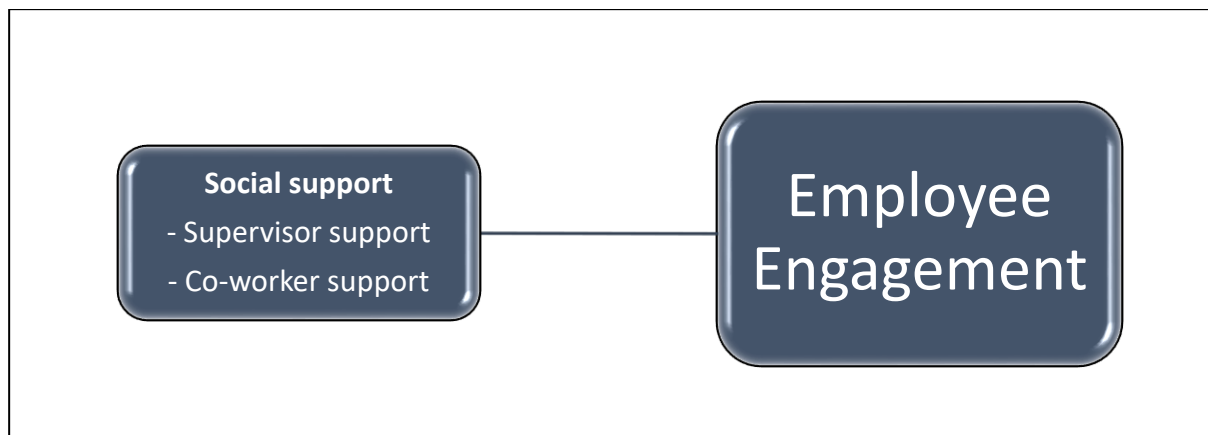


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the relationship between the social support and employee engagement. Based on the objectives, employee engagement is considered as independent variable meanwhile social support is considered as dependent variable. The support from social be made up of two items which are supervisor and co-worker support.

## Significance of Study

This study is conducted to examine the relationship between social support and employee engagement in selected service industry. There are few of the employees in the industry are selected. The purpose of this study is to know whether there are linking between an independent and dependent variables. There are two (2) key elements of social support that can help them to have employee engagement in the organization. Quantitative method and questionnaires was adopted from previous research will be used in this study. In order to have effective organizational, the organization itself needs to know the importance of social support. If there is no social support in one's organization, it may lead to disengagement and turnover of employee. Positive working environment are required as well for advancing ideal employee engagement (Shuck et., al 2011).

This study was conducted to fill in the research gaps as stated in the problem statement. From this research's result, it can be one of the contributions regarding the relationship between social support and employee engagement. This study may provide useful information and help the organization to practice this social support.

### **Limitation of the Study**

This study should be carried out carefully so that the information and data obtained later will be able to access the target of objective of the study. It is undeniable that this study is difficult to run when there are limitations in the study.

While there are several variables that can affect employee engagement, the researcher just selects and focuses on one aspect which is social support. Therefore, limitation of study occurs here because there are only few articles that request the next researcher to do this social support as future research.

Other than that, the distance between two locations where this study will be conducted in Sibu, Sarawak and the researcher is currently in Kota Samarahan, Kuching. The limitation here is cost of transportation and time consuming. Other than that, due to Pandemic COVID-19 and Restricted Movement Control, the process of data collection took a long time.

## Definition of Terms

*Table 1: Conceptual and Operational Definition of Terms*

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Conceptual</b>	<b>Operational</b>
Social Support	Social support refers to various types of support from others and is usually divided into two (something like three) main classifications: emotional , instrumental (and sometimes informative) support (Seeman, 2008)	In this study, social support is the support that given by the supervisor and co-worker.
Employee Engagement	Employee engagement has been defined as “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes” (Shuck and Wollard, 2010)	In this study, employee engagement is the involvement of the employee with their work and organization (vigor, dedication & absorption)

## Chapter Summary

This chapter is discussing about the issue that related to the study that entitled the relationship between social support and employee engagement among employees in selected service industry. It starts with the background of the study, statement of problem, research objectives, research hypotheses, significance of study, limitation of study, and the definition of terms that are going to be used in this study. The next chapter will discuss about the literature review that relevant to this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature that related to the relationship between social support and employee engagement among the employees in selected service industry. This chapter will present the discussion of the variables related to the study, the theory that will explain the study and the past research to support the hypotheses of this research study.

#### **Social Support**

Social support is deliberated as a possible to get sources elsewhere straightforwardly that had by a person (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2000). As stated by Schwarzer et al., (2004), social support has been defined in numerous ways. For instance, social support is resources that given by others, coping help, an exchange of resources and a behaviour characteristic (Schwarzer & Glade, 2007; Othman & Nasurdin, 2012). Hobfoll & Shirom, (2000); Westman et al., (2005) mentioned that the employees will not capable to make an improvement or investments for resource gain if they didn't receive any support such as the feedback from supervisor but the employees who perceive the positive feedback about their job will perform better and expected to search for chances to create their unused abilities and shape a suitable techniques of action.

As stated by Meijiman and Mulder (1998), social support can moreover play an external motivational part as a clever workplace that will make a person's preparation to commit one's tries and capacities to the job. Thus, the job and the objective of the work will be completed and accomplished. For instance, the support from co-worker and execution comment will increment the probability of being effective in finishing the objectives of the work. In this way, either done the basic fulfilment of necessities or complete the achievement

of work destinations, a positive result could be finished or the engagement of work would be anticipated to growth (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004, Schaufeli & Salanova 2007).

## **Employee Engagement**

As stated by Falcone (2006); Mohanty (2016), emotional and intellectual commitment to organizations are referred to employee engagement. Other than that, the employees that involved completely in their work and shows great deal of same interest are considered as an engaged employee (Richman, 2006; Mohanty, 2016). As stated by Shuck and Wollard (2010), representative engagement is a person employee's cognitive, passionate, and behavioral state coordinated toward craved organizational results. There are so many studies recommend that the existence of higher levels of employee engagement suggestively decreases the turnover intention (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Saks, 2006; Shuck, Reio, & Rocco, 2011, Shuck & Wollard, 2011). As mentioned by Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli (2009), higher levels of profit, overall revenue generation, and growth are associated with employee engagement. From the previous research, it is obviously employee engagement matters.

As mentioned by Shuck and Wollard (2010), the term of employee engagement defined engagement as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes. According to Schaufeli et al., (2008), the dimensions of employee engagement is divided into three aspects such as vigor, dedication and absorption. The first one is vigor which is characterized by great levels of strength and mental flexibility at work, great will for work, and perseverance in confronting difficulties. Next, dedication, checked by a feeling that's full of meaning, excitement, motivation, pride, and being challenged at work. The third one is absorption, considered by a deep concentration and interest in the work. The measure of an employee's passionate and knowledgeable responsibility to their organization and its achievement is an engaged employee (Hewitt

Associates, 2009). The employee who are to be expected to contribute to a better performance in the organization is the employee who are engaged. Last but not least, employee engagement is crucial in organization because it is one of the efforts to improve the relationship between the organization and its employees (Hasanati, 2018).

## **Theory Related to the Study**

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory (SET) is one of the greatest powerful conceptual ideal models for understanding workplace behaviour (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to Homans (1958), in the field of social behaviour, this theory is one of the oldest and most analysed theories. Social exchange is describe “as the exchange of activity, unmistakable or intangible, and more or less fulfilling or exorbitant, between at slightest two individuals.” (Homans, 1961). This theory explains that organizations care and provide the chances for the employees. Hence, the employees will demonstration certain attitudes and manners. Indeed, the employees be given favourable management they tend to give back which leads to benefits between the organization and the employees (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). According to Saks (2006), when the organization gives enough attention to the employees, they will act in response with a certain level of employee engagement.

As stated by Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp (2001), this model of SET states that certain work environment antecedents lead to social relations, linked to as social exchange relationships. Social exchange connections expand when the employers taking care of their employees which subsequently incites advantageous results. In the other words, the social exchange relationship could be an arbiter or mediating variable: Advantageous and reasonable exchanges between solid connections, and these connections produce active work behaviour and positive employee manners. Blau (1964) as well sketched out exchange

relations as causally correlated, in spite of the fact that the heading of the causal arrow is to some degree equivocal. For instance, he contended that “the role of the relationship between exchange partners” potency to “affect the method of social exchange”, which means that the relationship affect the sort of give-and-take. However, he still point out that effective exchanges can be the reason of one person to gotten to be dedicated to one another.

## **Discussion of Past Related Findings**

### **Social Support and Employee Engagement**

Social support in the workplace can be considered as one of the important factors affecting employees in various aspects. Correspond to organizational support theory, supervisor support (SVS) encourages alterations in employees’ stages of emotional commitment. Supervisor support is described as employees’ sees their supervisors sense their commitments and care approximately their welfare (Ali, 2016). As operators in the organization, dependable supervisor coordinate and assess the employees’ work performance. In this way, employees regularly see the input of their supervisor as characteristic of the direction of organization toward them. Apart from that, as employees are aware that their supervisor's assessment of their performance of work is regularly communicated to officials who are seen as representatives of the organization, the affiliation between employee engagement and the support of supervisors is reinforced.

The support from supervisor can lead the employees to great-reaching responsibility through work fulfilment and inspiration. It’s considered that employees that accept their supervisors as compassionate leaders will achieve tremendous commitment than employees who don't see their supervisors as such. As stated by Ali (2016), supervisor evaluation once more point out to the degree to which supervisors are strong, inviting and obliging, counsel assistants and notice their commitment.

Supervisor support is one of the criteria that has been recognized as a key factor in educating employee engagement. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) who conducted a study among employees of four separate Dutch service organizations: an insurance firm, a pension fund firm, an occupational health and safety service and a home care institution, throughout their research, job resources that also included social support from employees and performance evaluations were found to be related to employee engagement. The study of researches show that when the supervisors are inspiring, the engagement will happen normally. Supervisors are in charge for cooperating that the employees' actions play the most important part in overall commerce accomplishment. According to Schneider et al., (2009), a supervisor, who is true and helpful, is speculated to influence the employee engagement of the followers in the sense of increasing their participation, pleasure and excitement in the workplace. As studied by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004), engagement of work means an achieving, positive, work related state of mind that's categorized by vigor, dedication and absorption. Evidence has been given by prior research that engagement of work can be measured unfailingly (Schaufeli & Van Rhenen, 2006).

Social support is considered as the by and large level of supportive social relations accessible on the work from supervisors and co-workers (Karasek & Theorell 1990). Co-worker support did refer to co-workers who assist each other in their tasks when necessary by sharing knowledge and expertise, as well as by providing support and encouragement (Zhou & George, 2001). Supervisory support might be a social exchange construct, where the employees see the supervisors sense their commitments and concern about their welfare (Eisenberger et al. 2002). The theory of social exchange is that, out of chance, if employees feel their supervisor supports and concerns about their welfare, they would feel involved in the organization and would feel appreciative to repay the favour to their supervisor by staying within the organization. The bond with a supervisor is deliberated as one of the key